



ROCKFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDER

NUMBER: 2.50

TITLE: LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

SERIES NUMBER: 2 - OPR

SERIES TITLE: OPERATIONS

TOPICS / REFERENCE: DOMESTIC DISPUTE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, ORDERS OF PROTECTION, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE

APPENDICES: A

ORIGINAL EFFECTIVE / ISSUE DATE: October 31, 2017

DATE OF LAST REVISION:

THIS ORDER REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL REVISED OR RESCINDED

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Rockford Police Department to use a Lethality Screen at the scene of domestic violence incidents involving intimate partners to identify victims of domestic violence in potentially lethal situations and follow the established criteria to place those victims in immediate and direct contact with a domestic violence service program hotline advocate. Officers administering the Lethality Screen shall ask the victim if they will answer the questions on the form after the initial investigation. When a victim is assessed as being in high-danger, the investigating officer should call Remedies and offer the victim the opportunity to speak with a hotline advocate.

PURPOSE:

To establish a protocol for the use of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) at those domestic violence calls for service which involve intimate partner violence. These guidelines are not meant to be all-inclusive, since each incident must be dealt with on an individual basis, but are intended as broad guidelines to assist the employees and supervisors involved.

This Order is comprised of the following numbered section:

- I. DEFFINITIONS**
- II. INITIATING A LETHALITY ASSESSMENT**
- III. FILING OF THE LETHALITY SCREEN**
- IV. LAP AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE**
- V. TRAINING**

APPENDICES:

A. Rockford Police Department Lethal Assessment Form

I. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Domestic Trouble:** For the purpose of this policy, refers to any argument, quarrel, shouting or confrontation between or among domestic partners and/or other family members that does not include an act of violence (threatened or actual) and/or a criminal act.
- B. Domestic Violence:** For the purpose of this policy, refers to any act of violence (threatened or actual) including but not limited to:
 - 1. Bodily injury or threat of imminent bodily injury;
 - 2. Sexual assault;
 - 3. Unlawful physical restraint;
 - 4. Property crime directed at the victim;
 - 5. Violation of a court order of protection, or similar injunction;
 - 6. Death perpetrated by an individual upon his or her partner. Partner is defined as any individual with whom the person:
 - a. Is or was legally married;
 - b. Has a child in common;
 - c. Is or has cohabitated;
 - d. Has or had a dating relationship; or
 - e. Is specified as such by Illinois State Law.
- C. Abuser:** A person who perpetrates a pattern of coercive tactics which can include physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse against an intimate partner with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control over the victim;
- D. Victim:** The person against whom an abuser directs coercive and/or violent acts;
- E. Intimate Relationship:** When two people have, or have had, a sexual or emotionally intimate relationship;
- F. Intimate Partners:** Intimate partners are persons who are, or have been involved in an intimate relationship who:
 - 1. Are married, separated, or divorced;
 - 2. Live or have lived together;
 - 3. Have children in common; or
 - 4. Date, or have dated, but do not live, or never have lived, together.

- G.** Lethality Screen: The evidence-based field instrument used by trained practitioners to assess a person, who is a victim of intimate partner violence, for her/his, risk of being killed by an intimate partner.
- H.** High Danger: A term used for a victim who has been assessed through use of the Lethality Screen as being at the greatest risk of being killed. The victim is said to be at "high danger".
- I.** Dedicated Domestic Cell Phone: Department owned cell phone issued to officers prior their tour of duty to be used for only domestic related incidents including but not limited to lethality screenings.
- J.** Limited English Proficient (LEP) individual means any individual whose primary language is not English, and has limited or no ability to speak, understand, read, or write English (GENERAL ORDER 1.28 - LANGUAGE ACCESS AND DEPARTMENT INTERPRETERS).
- K.** Remedies: Winnebago County based advocacy center offering case management, education, advocacy, and emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence.

II. INITIATING LETHALITY SCREENING:

A. General:

1. The responding officer shall complete the Lethality Screen when he/she responds to a domestic trouble involving intimate partners and one or more of the following conditions exists:
 - a. An act of domestic violence has occurred;
 - b. When the victim is 18 and over.
 - c. There is a belief or sense on the part of the responding officer, that once the victim is no longer in the care or presence of the responding officer the potential for assault or danger is high;
 - d. Repeated calls for domestic related incidents at the same location or involving the same parties; or
 - e. The responding officer believes one should be administered based on his/her experience and training.
2. If exigent circumstances prevent the officer from completing the Lethality Screen while on scene, the officer must indicate in the case report narrative why it was not completed; and
3. If necessary, responding officers shall engage interpreter services to assist in the process; and
4. Domestic Violence Unit Supervisor or their designee shall follow up in incidents where a Lethality Screen was not completed on scene.

B. Lethality Screen Questions:

1. To initiate the Lethality Screen the responding officer should:

- a. Advise the victim that the officer would like to ask the victim a series of questions to help the officer determine the immediate potential for danger to the victim;
- b. Administer the Lethality Screen outside the presence, hearing and awareness of the abusive partner, family and/or other household members, and any other parties who may also be in the residence; and
- c. Ask all questions in order as listed on the form.

C. High-Danger Victims and the Hotline Call:

- 1. If a victim is determined to be high-danger after the assessment is made based on the Lethality Screen:
 - a. Officers should advise the victim that her/his situation has indicated that the victim is at an increased level of danger;
 - b. Invite the victim to speak with a hotline advocate:
 - i. If the victim initially declines to speak with the hotline advocate.
 - A. Contact the domestic violence hotline via the dedicated domestic cell phone to receive guidance on how to proceed; and
 - B. Ask the victim if she/he has reconsidered and offer the opportunity to speak with the hotline advocate.
 - ii. If the victim continues to decline to speak with the hotline advocate, the officer should restate basic safety planning and if possible, obtain a safe phone number to provide to the hotline advocate for follow-up. If the victim declines, the officer should note the same on the form.
 - c. If the victim agrees to speak with a hotline advocate, the officer shall call the hotline number via the dedicated domestic cell phone, introduce him/herself, and advise the hotline advocate that he/she has made a "high-danger" assessment. The officer shall provide responses to a brief set of questions prompted by the hotline advocate;
 - d. During the conversation between the hotline advocate and the victim, the officer shall stay on the scene and allow the victim privacy while she/he speaks with the hotline; and
 - e. Officers shall provide reasonable assistance to the victim if help is requested, such as transporting the victim to a safe place.

D. Assessing the Responses to the Lethality Screen - Non-High Danger:

- 1. Non-High Danger victims are not at the same level of danger as High-Danger victims and therefore do not warrant the same urgent level of communication.

- a. Advise victim that domestic violence situations are dangerous.
 - b. Advise victim to look for signs of danger.
 - c. Refer the victim to Remedies and/or the victim's advocate for follow-up; and
 - d. Give victim officer's contact information.
 - e. Provide the victim with the Illinois Domestic Violence Act Form.
- E. Working with Parties with Limited English Proficiency (LEP):
1. Officers should have employed their agency's language access plan prior to administering the Lethality Screen or performing any part of the protocol; (Hyperlink G.O. 1.28 - LANGUAGE ACCESS AND DEPARTMENT INTERPRETERS)
 2. If available, an officer and/or an advocate who speak the victim's primary language shall respond and perform the LAP. If unavailable, officers should make use of the Language Line; and
 3. The Lethality Screen should proceed according to the protocol, revised only to take into account the requirements of language interpretation.

III. FILING OF THE LETHALITY SCREEN FORM:

A. Once the Lethality Screen has been completed, officers shall:

1. Fill out the [Rockford Police Department Lethal Assessment Form](#) and submit by clicking " Submit" on the bottom of the form. The link is located on the [Rockford Police Intranet-Field Services Page](#).

Note: whenever a Lethality Screen is completed, a notation shall be entered in the narrative of the incident report, i.e. "Lethality Screen completed".

B. The Rockford Police Department Lethal Assessment Form shall be completed prior to end of shift. The agency shall maintain a file of all Lethality Screens in the associated case file.

IV. LAP AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE:

A. The LAP agency representative will be the Domestic Violence Unit Supervisor, who will be responsible for:

1. Reporting data as requested and providing it to the LAP team coordinator;
2. Forward copy of Lethality Screen to Remedies (<http://www.remediesrenewinglives.org/>)
3. Serving as a liaison, communicating, and meeting with other agency LAP representatives; and
4. Maintaining a file of all lethality screens.

V. TRAINING:

- A. LAP and LEP training shall be provided by trained staff to all probationary - sworn personnel during the Core Skills Academy, as well as all new entry-level Central Reporting Unit (CRU) personnel as part of their initial training.
- B. Refresher LAP training shall be provided as needed.

ALL GENERAL ORDERS REMAIN IN EFFECT UNTIL REVISED OR RESCINDED.

ANY MEMBER OF THE DEPARTMENT MAY, BY VIRTUE OF EXPERTISE OR POSITION OF FUNCTION, BE DESIGNATED TO AUTHOR OR PROVIDE SOURCE MATERIAL FOR A WRITTEN DIRECTIVE. THE OVERALL AUTHORITY TO ISSUE, MODIFY OR APPROVE WRITTEN DIRECTIVES IS DESIGNATED TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE. HOWEVER, AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO ISSUE DIRECTIVES IS DELEGATED TO THE FOLLOWING.

ALL GENERAL ORDERS ARE SCHEDULED TO BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY BY THE GENERAL ORDER REVIEW COMMITTEE AND WHEN NECESSARY, REVISED OR CANCELED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCEDURES FOR REVIEWING WRITTEN DIRECTIVES ESTABLISHED IN GENERAL ORDER 1.10 – WRITTEN DIRECTIVES.

ALL NEW AND REVISED GENERAL ORDERS SHALL BE APPROVED BY THE CHIEF OF POLICE BEFORE ISSUE/REISSUE.

ANY EMPLOYEE WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR REVISIONS AND/OR IMPROVEMENTS TO THIS ORDER ARE ENCOURAGED TO SUBMIT THEIR IDEAS TO THEIR RESPECTIVE DISTRICT COMMANDER OR BUREAU CHIEF.

BY ORDER OF

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Daniel G. O'Shea

Chief of Police